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uncensured? I fear their pernicious examples, have had an injurious tendency. Doubtless they injured themselves: and some are in danger of unwittingly breaking down the fences of morality, by making, in the plenitude of their charity, too great allowances for their defects, and require to be called back to re-consider the verdict of acquittal, which they have been too ready to pronounce. With every proper allowance for the failings of others, the strict laws of justice compel us to denominate actions as they are. Let us pity the offenders, but for the sake of salutary prevention to others, let us brand the offence as it merits, and no longer suffer that axiom of relaxed morality to be pleaded, that genius palliates the enormity of vice. Burns, debased into the drunken exciseman, and Dermody, "earth-enamoured, grovelling with the worm," are objects entitled to our commiseration, but not to that allowance which would mask the unseemly features of vice with something like the semblance of virtue, or reconcile us to error, because it is accompanied with genius. Vice is really more hideous, when it is unhappily blended with such qualities, as render the contrast more striking.

While I am on the subject of Burns, I am led to make some remarks on the danger of introducing persons into a sphere of life different from that to which they have been accustomed. I admit that the distinctions of rank are imaginary; but while they have such influence in common estimation, their ideal consequence has a most intoxicating effect on ardent minds, who have been suddenly raised, and who fondly embrace the fatal doctrine of the unaccountability of genius. Robert Bloomfield certainly possesses very pleasing poetical talents, but I have not heard of his eccentricities. I trust he is not a dupe to this deceptive doctrine, but that, happily for himself, he will long continue the honest and industrious shoemaker of London, honourable in his useful profession, and employing only his leisure hours in commerce with the muses. How happy would it have been for Burns, if his injudicious friends had never taken him from a home in Ayrshire, as in

his future ramblings he never had the happiness to find another, or vitiated his taste for the simple pleasures of nature, by seducing him to partake of the intoxicating and debasing enjoyments of Edinburgh, and the reveries of the Caledonian hunt. Burns had afterwards many dwelling-places, but appears never to have enjoyed those sweet domestic comforts, which enter into the delightful sensations of which home is composed. To enjoy them in their full perfection, the mind must be simple and pure: the relish for them is lost by indulging in those false and artificial pleasures, which leave behind them a permanent taint. Burns feebly directed his agricultural engagements at Ellisland, but his mind hovered over the departed joys of which he had partaken among his former dissipated companions, who used his wit as a relish to their drunken frolics, and their soulless debaucheries. He miserably prostituted his genius, and unhappily acquired a propensity to indulge in such grovelling pleasures. When he was not possessing them, he was dejected and spiritless, and when he could snatch at them, the inordinate stimulus brought on a premature debility, and the wasting of his bodily and mental powers.

Let the mistaken advocates for good fellowship and convivial mirth, examine the condition of the last days of Burns: will they then venture to assert that true happiness consists in noisy computations?—From his example also it may be seen, that every flower will not bear transplanting. The mountain daisy will soon lose its beauty in the unfriendly air of the crowded city. K.

For the Belfast Magazine.

AS the present age seems to feel a very considerable interest in old English literature, I should think that the following account of a once celebrated satirical tract may gratify the taste of many of your readers. The book is entitled *Niobe; or, Age of Tears*. The Author is Stafford. It was printed by Humphry Lowndes, 1611. It is very scarce.

This excellent and sincerely-written treatise was published in the reign of

James I. It is a very severe satire on the age, of whose crimes the author speaks with honest and zealous indignation. It is composed in a mournful strain, as may be guessed from the title. He is very severe on the women, and gives them such a character, as, if true, perfectly warrants his angry reproaches.

He gives a ludicrous description of a country cully.

He descants with all the eloquent warmth of sincere feeling on the character of the famous Sidney. He is lavish in his praises of Elizabeth, though not with equal justice; and says, that if Solomon had lived in her time, he would himself have come to visit the Queen of the North.

Speaking of the licentiousness of the women, he humorously says,—"Had Job lived in our hours, he never should have needed to have made a covenant with his eyes, lest at any time they should looke upon a maid; for he should scarce have found any to looke upon."

No wonder, that with this opinion of the ladies, he recommends celibacy strongly.

I suspect that Milton had read this book, from a remarkable coincidence in the following passages.

"Throni, Dominationes, virtutes, Potestates, Principatus," says Stafford.

"Thrones, dominations, principdoms, virtues, powers," says Milton.

The Devil says, in Stafford: "Believe me, Sir, I had rather controule within my dark diocese, than to re-inhabit cælum empyrium, and there live in subjection, under check."

The Devil, in Milton, says:

"In my choice,

"To reign is worth ambition, tho' in hell:
"Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven."

Stafford shows a determined hatred of Popery in those days: he makes the Devil's chair of state supported by four Popes.

He uses the Devil with very little ceremony, and calls him by the following curious names:—"Don De-formity; Mr. Mouldy-face; Monsieur Madcappe; Mr. Blacksmith; Mr. Fierie Facies; Electour of Erebus; Grimme-yasaged Goblin; Bellowing Beelzebub; Mr. Divell; Mr. Filthy-face; Dr. De-

lusion; Old Hell-hounde, Great Marshal of Mischief; Great Soldan of Sin, &c."

The characters of the scholar and the soldier, are those which Stafford most admires, though he does not disguise the faults and miseries incident to each. His favourites seem to be Seneca; the Scaligers; Sir Philip Sydney; Henry IV. of France, and Elizabeth of England.

Grave and religious as he is, he is no enemy to a joke: his language is even more quaint than the language of those times, abounding with plays upon words, which give an air of drollery to the most solemn passages.

At the end of the work is a severe letter to a Romanist, who had written against his book. He treats his adversary with infinite contempt, and insults over him with true horse-play railery. He ends by saying that he should write no more "to please those who make pleasure their God."

London, July, 1809.

B.

To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

SIR,

MR. LEDWICH, in his antiquities of Ireland, allows us "eminence in nothing but music." He quotes Cambrensis to show, that at the time of the English invasion, we excelled in the science of music all other nations. This eulogium, he says, "the richness of our invention, the vivacity, beauty, and variety of our melodies, extorted from him." And Mr. Ledwich seems to have allowed applause to be extorted from him too, in this instance. Now, Mr. Editor, it strikes me very forcibly, that such refinement in this science is incompatible with such a state of barbarism as we are represented, by Cambrensis, to have been found in by the English; and contrary to our experience of any country which we at present denominated barbarous.

I am surprized that a man like Mr. Ledwich should so implicitly follow Cambrensis, whom I cannot look upon in any other light than that of a man endeavouring, like too many of his countrymen at the present day, in all things to calumniate and misrepresent us. But the power of our music he could not resist; he was forced to ac-